

No. 20.

OXFORD PAMPHLETS  
1914

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NIETZSCHE AND  
TREITSCHKE

The Worship of Power  
In Modern Germany

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FOURTH IMPRESSION

*Price Twopence net*

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

HUMPHREY MILFORD

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY

Spec 644

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P68B370

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## THE WORSHIP OF POWER IN MODERN GERMANY

### I

DURING the great days of the French Revolution and the War of Liberation Germany produced two great thinkers. One was Kant : the other was Hegel. Kant was the philosopher of Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God—duty, supreme over all alleged ‘ interests ’, and dominant over all pretensions of power. He held before Europe the ideal of a permanent peace achieved by ‘ a federal league of nations, in which even the weakest member looks for protection to the united power ’. An austere sense of law, pervading and controlling at once individual life, the life of the State, and even the life of the European comity or commonwealth of States—this was the note of his teaching. Hegel, in reaction against what he regarded as the bare austerity of Kant, preached a different doctrine. Duty, he held, was the fulfilling of a station in the community. It was an empty concept apart from the State. Faithfully to discharge his function as a member of his State—this is the duty of man. Along this line Hegel—perhaps influenced by admiration for Prussia—advanced to a conception of the State as something of an absolute, something of an ultimate, to which the individual must be adjusted, and from his relation to which he draws his meaning and being. The State, he could write, is the Universal, which has become ‘ for

itself', consciously and explicitly, all that it is 'in itself', in its latent and potential nature. Thus self-conscious and self-moved, it is a real individual, which can exist by itself in the world as an ultimate. As for the citizen, the apparent individual—why, he is an atom, which, 'seeking to be a centre for itself, is brought by the State back into the life of the universal substance'. Absolute, ultimate, universal—the State becomes a sort of transcendental majesty, *cui nihil viget simile aut secundum*. It is significant that Hegel, in his philosophy of the State, devotes less than a page to international law: it is still more significant that he can say, 'the state of war shows the omnipotence of the State in its individuality; country and fatherland are then the power, which convicts of nullity the independence of individuals.' It is here—in this neglect of international law, and in this glorification of war—that one lays one's finger on a permanent and essential attribute of German political thought and practice. If Kant is the philosopher of one side of Prussia, if he expresses that deep sense of duty which made Frederic the Great the first servant of the State, Hegel is the philosopher of another side, and Hegel expresses that sense of the absolute finality of the State which made Frederic seize Silesia in spite of an international guarantee of the integrity of the Austrian dominions, and impelled him to carry Prussia further and further along the paths of militarism.

Since the days of Sadowa and Sedan Germany has produced two other thinkers, Nietzsche and Treitschke. Both were ultimately of Slavonic origin; both were professors, the one of philosophy, the other of history; both lived and thought and taught in the new Germany which sprang from the great wars of 1866 and 1870.

They caught the spirit, and they helped to make the spirit, of that new Germany whose note, it has been well said, is *subdual*. Power, more power, and always power—this was the gospel which they found, and preached. ‘Political questions are questions of power’ was Bismarck’s principle. ‘Two souls dwell in the German nation,’ a Berlin professor wrote.

The German nation has been called the nation of poets and thinkers, and it may be proud of the name. To-day it may again be called the nation of masterful combatants, as which it originally appeared in history.

The spirit of mastery was abroad : it could be seen in State policy ; it could be seen in a vast economic expansion ; it could be seen in the grandiose massiveness of those buildings, ‘veritable mastodons of masonry’, which modern Germany loves to erect. Of that spirit Nietzsche and Treitschke have, in very different ways, both been the prophets. The one was a bitter enemy of Christianity : the other was a stern Protestant. The one detested the ‘bovine spirit of nationality’ and denounced Prussian militarism : the other preached exclusive Germanism and the glory of the sword. But both alike made power their watchword ; both alike loved war, and striving for mastery, and subdual ; both hated England.

## II

The name Nietzsche is said to be derived from a Slavonic word signifying ‘humble’. Nietzsche, however, was inclined to claim a noble origin from the counts of Nietzki, and he certainly did not love humility. It is another paradox that the man who boasted himself ‘the most essential opponent of Christianity’ should

have been the son of a village pastor. He was born in 1834 : he died in 1900. He served in the army for a few months in 1867, and during the campaign of 1870 he worked for a little time in the German Ambulance Corps. For ten years, from 1869 to 1879, he acted as professor of Classical Philology in the University of Bâle ; for the next ten years he was a wandering invalid ; for the last eleven years of his life he was insane.

The stuff on which his mind worked was partly Greek literature and art, and partly biology, of which he acquired in later years a somewhat superficial knowledge. From the one he drew an aesthetic interpretation of the world, as a thing non-moral but potentially beautiful ; from the other he drew the vision of the new beauty which might enter the world through the evolution of the superman. It was, perhaps, from both, or rather his own interpretation of both, that he drew his primary premiss. Life, that premiss ran, is essentially 'amoral'. The world is simply an aesthetic phenomenon, neither good nor bad—that is to say, in effect, neither beautiful nor ugly. All things in the world—all intentions and actions of men—are amoral. 'There are no moral phenomena ; there is merely a moral interpretation of phenomena.' Nothing is, but thinking makes it so ; and all so-called moral values are the creations of human interpretation. To these creations we must address a simple question. Are these existing valuations of intentions and acts as moral or immoral, as beautiful or ugly, of any real value ? Or must they be 'transvalued' to suit a new and higher standard ?

To answer such a question we must first of all examine existing values critically. If we do so, we find that



they are not absolute but relative. They are relative to race, and differ from race to race : they are relative to time, and vary from time to time.

Good and evil which would be everlasting—it doth not exist. All is in flux. Everything good is the evil of yore which has been rendered serviceable.

The morality of to-day is thus a phase, and nothing more ; and it is a phase to be condemned. This is plain, if we examine first its content, and then its source. The content of its rules shows that they are intended to adapt the individual to the advantage of the community or herd. Truthfulness is praised because it lets the herd know what to expect ; lying is blamed because it leaves the herd in a state of uncomfortable mystification. But is the advantage of the herd, after all, an ultimate criterion ? Morality makes that assumption : is it entitled to its assumption ? All is not necessarily for the best, when

lofty independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, are felt to be dangers ; when everything that elevates the individual above the herd is called evil, and the tolerant, unassuming, self-adapting, self-equalizing disposition attains the moral distinction and honour.

Nor does the source of this morality entitle it to any more respect. The source is alleged to be conscience ; and this conscience professes to condemn actions on the assumption of the free will of their agents and on the ground of the wrong use of that will. The profession and assumptions are baseless. There is no freedom of the will. Heredity and environment are the sources of our acts : what we call free will is really the ' complex state of delight ' of a personality as it issues inevitably in action ; and the supposed free will of the moralist is

really 'the most egregious theological trick . . . for the purpose of making mankind responsible in a theological manner—that is to say, dependent upon theologians'. As we cannot speak of free will, so we cannot speak of conscience. Conscience is not the source of valuations. The herd creates values by an emotion, an emotion of the same aesthetic nature as that of the artist contemplating his work—an emotion of comfortable contentedness with all that is pleasing to its senses. But shall we be foolish enough to accept the aesthetic sense of the herd as the final determinant of our values?

Thus the community or herd creates, on the impulse of a sensuous emotion of contentedness inspired by certain kind of acts and intentions, a herd-morality which assigns moral value to acts and intentions advantageous to the herd. Once created, this morality is imitated: the force of mimicry, so potent in nature, as Nietzsche learned from his biological studies, is equally potent in man. But it is no guarantee of the truth of this morality that it was created by a majority, or that it has lasted through the centuries. The herd is a herd of slaves, contented just to live. But there are masters as well as slaves; and masters are determined not only to have life, but to have it abundantly. For in truth—so Nietzsche held—any real life is not the issue of a mere 'will to live', as Darwin taught; nor does the world show any mere 'struggle for existence', in which those who are fittest just to exist survive the ordeal. Life is the issue of a 'will to power'; and the world shows a struggle for power in which the greatest power wins not only survival but dominance.

Life is a state of opulence, luxuriance, and even absurd prodigality: where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for power. Life is essentially appropria-



tion, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of its own forms, incorporation, at the least and in its mildest form exploitation. The criterion of truth lies in the enhancement of the feeling of power.

That then is true which enables me to expand in the full opulence of power : that is good which contributes to the unfolding of my power in the full blossom of action. Power is of the few, ultimately perhaps of the one, the Caesar or Napoleon ; and since power is the standard, it is therefore the few whose truth is the *vraie vérité des choses*, and whose morality is the true morality. Herd-morality, slave-morality, is untrue and immoral—untrue, that is to say, and immoral, if one seeks to apply or enforce it among masters, but true enough and moral enough for the slave. Let the slave demand and cultivate truth and pity—for himself and for his like. Truth and pity are the conditions of living—of bare living : and since that is all the slave can expect, truth and pity are his *métier*. They are not the *métier* of the master. What he expects and demands is power ; and power can only be attained in war ; and in war all things are fair,<sup>1</sup> and pity is misplaced.

There were preachers of power before Nietzsche. In the *Gorgias* of Plato Callicles already expounds the doctrine of herd-morality and master-morality. Convention, says Callicles, is one thing : nature is another. Convention is made by the majority or herd, who are weaklings and slaves ; ‘and they make laws and distribute praises and censures with a view to themselves and their own interests.’ But ‘nature herself intimates

<sup>1</sup> ‘It matters greatly to what end one lies, whether one preserves or destroys by means of falsehood.’

that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, the more powerful than the weaker ' ; and ' a man who had sufficient force would trample under foot all formulas and spells and charms ', rising in the strength of his power and asserting the just right of his might. Let him who would see sophistry of this sort blown to the winds turn to his Plato ; for Callicles is just Nietzsche, and Nietzsche is just Callicles. But he is a Callicles with some twenty-three added centuries of experience ; and it is worth while to see how, not in its essence but in its trappings and adornments, the doctrine has grown in all these years.

There are for Nietzsche, as for Callicles, two moralities, each for its appointed class—the slave-morality based on the calculus of general advantage or the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and the master-morality founded on the rock of power. Of the two the latter is ultimate and absolute ; the former has only relative truth. This herd-morality, this slave-morality, is the morality of democracy and of Socialism : it is also the morality of Christianity. Democracy, Socialism, Christianity, all stand for the advantage of the weak. They are all anarchical, for they all contravene the just hierarchy of nature, whereby the strong rules the weak ; and they all encourage a temper of unstable sentimentality at the expense of disciplined power. Especially does Nietzsche denounce Christianity. It defeats the operations of natural selection : ' Christian altruism is the mob ego-tism of the weak.' It is a religion of maudlin pity, which preserves the botched, the weak, the degenerate. It is the religion of the infirmary ; and yet again it is the religion of Anarchy, because its object is destruction and the pulling down of the mighty from their seats. Not the dogma but the morality of Christianity is the

object of Nietzsche's attack ; and it is not our Lord, but St. Paul, whom he regards as the founder of this morality. St. Paul was the standard-bearer in a revolt of the decadents. He began the work of destroying the fruits of 'the will to the future of mankind, the great Yea to all things, which was materialized in the *imperium Romanum*' ; and henceforth a legion of 'crafty, stealthy, invisible, anaemic vampires'—St. Augustine for instance—continued his work of destruction. 'St. Paul was a slave-mind . . . with a bad conscience and a thirst for power' (though Nietzsche, by the way, has already denied the existence of conscience and deified the thirst for power) ;

and Paul, this appalling impostor, pandered to the instincts of Chandala (or Slave) morality in those paltry people when he said : Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

So through Paul came to pass the revolt of decadence, and the turning of the world into an infirmary peopled by anaemic ascetics, who 'succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite—sublime powers, capable of idealization—into hellish genii and phantom goblins'.

Nietzsche seeks to destroy Christian destruction, and to return to a healthy paganism in which there shall be the drunk delight of battle with peers on ringing windy plains. Not peace, but a sword wielded by the will to power—that is the true way of the world.

Horribly clangs its silvery bow ; and although it comes like the night, war is nevertheless Apollo, the true divinity for consecrating and purifying states. . . . National consumption, as well as individual, admits of a brutal cure. . . . Let the little schoolgirls say : 'To be good is sweet and touching.' Ye say, a good cause will hallow even war ? I say unto you : a good war hallows every cause. War and courage have done greater

things than love of your neighbour.<sup>1</sup> . . . Against the deviation of the State-ideal into a money-ideal the only remedy is war, and once again war, in the emotions of which this at any rate becomes clear, that in love to fatherland and prince the State produces an ethical impulse indicative of a much higher destiny.

Passages such as these would seem to indicate an aggressive and militant nationalism. But Nietzsche is not consistent; and nationalism, as has already been said, is one of his many *bêtes noires*. His constructive ideal is not national, and the war he would preach is not an ordinary battle of the nations. What he seeks is the gradual evolution of the type of man upwards and onwards to the superman. What he desires is an evolution working not through the will to live, but through the will to power, and not blindly, but under the direction of man's progressive intelligence. He would have the strong and vigorous to sort themselves out by struggle, to train themselves for further struggle, and to produce children who should at once inherit<sup>2</sup>, continue, and improve that training, in order that finally, through successive improvements of the stock, a super-species should arise. His ideal may be said to be a sort of combination of Comte and Galton, of Positivism and Eugenics. Like the Positivist, he would abandon theology, and seek a goal in manhood, here on earth; like the Eugenist, he would create the manhood by pure breeding.

Let your will say: the superman shall be the meaning of the earth. I conjure you, my brethren, remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak to you of hopes beyond the earth. I love him who liveth

<sup>1</sup> This passage is inscribed on the title-page of Bernhardt's *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche seems to have believed in the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

in order to know, and seeketh to know in order that hereafter the superman may live. I love him who laboureth and investeth that he may build the house for the superman.

At first Nietzsche seems to have thought of the superman as a single individual: he repeatedly speaks of Napoleon. Gradually, however, superman passed into super-species. Of the evolution there were apparently to be three stages: first, an aristocracy to rule all Europe; next, a new European race of 'higher men'; and finally, the race of supermen. It is significant that Nietzsche dreams of a united Europe, or a United States of Europe. Nationalism, in his later years, he abandoned. 'Is there a single idea behind this bovine nationalism?' 'We are not nearly German enough to advocate nationalism and race-hatred.' He emphasizes the unity of European culture, and the coming unity of European economics; he looks to the day when men shall be called in honour Good Europeans, 'the heirs of Europe, the rich, overwealthy heirs, the heirs, only too deeply pledged, of millennia of European thought.' Already, he feels, in the nineteenth century itself the profoundest spirits have been seeking to anticipate the good European of the future, and they have only fallen back into patriotism when their wings flagged from carrying them further. Of such stuff were Napoleon and Goethe, Beethoven and Heine—men who transcended nationality and transcended the State, 'that coldest of monsters and most frigid of liars', which pretends to be the People, and by the People is detested.

Meanwhile this generation must travail for the future.

Talk not of 'land of my fathers': our bark must steer for the land of our children. Oh my brothers, I consecrate and lead you to a new nobility; ye shall



be to me begetters and trainers and sowers of the future.

In this duty of preparation for the superman the old egoism seems forgotten, or at any rate transmuted into a grave and austere altruism. True, the superman who is to come is a lover of power and not of contentment, of war and not of peace ; true, they from whose loins he shall come must be of like substance. And yet the sacrifice remains. This generation shall not see the superman, but it must surrender itself to his production. That production thus becomes as it were a categorical imperative, and indeed a religion. The will to power abides ; but it is the will to power as it will be embodied in the future race, and not the will to power as it lives in the men of to-day. The men of to-day must possess their souls in rigorous patience, not expanding in opulence, but contracting themselves to a rigid austerity of self-discipline and training. Here Nietzsche turns to Eugenics, and preaches the need of legislation for the race rather than for the individual ; for the future rather than for the present. He turns too to education, not of the masses but of the few men picked for great and lasting work—the aristocracy of good Europeans, the higher men, who shall be bridges to the supermen—men self-disciplined, obedient, faithful ; men of a good courage and a burning hope. So shall heroism (*Heldentum*) come back into honour, and an age shall arise ‘ which will carry heroism into knowledge and wage war for the sake of ideas and their consequences ’—a phrase in which one seems to detect in advance the idea of the culture-war intended to disseminate higher culture among less cultured nations.

It would be difficult to prove that Nietzsche’s doctrine is consistent. His books are a chaos of separate aphor-



isms and aperçus ; and he can at once denounce the State and hold that in war it produces a great ethical impulse—at once laud the will to power, and extol a Spartan self-discipline. His dream of the United States of Europe, and of mankind perfected by Eugenics, may attract, and rightly attract, many noble souls. He did not pander to that exclusive and jealous nationalism which has consumed modern Germany—‘that national heart-itch and blood-poisoning’ which he detested. But as Luther once said, ‘the Word goes into the ordinary man excellent, and comes out of him fleshly.’ *Quicquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur*. Now Nietzsche, neglected in his lifetime, has been held in great honour since his death ; and tens of thousands of his books have been sold in Germany.<sup>1</sup> He has been ‘received’ ; and it is difficult to believe that he has not been received according to the temper of modern Germany. Anti-nationalist himself, he has nevertheless ministered, by his gospel of power, to the national instinct for subdual. The Germans have felt, no doubt vaguely and almost unconsciously, that they are the European aristocracy, destined to ‘carry heroism into knowledge and to wage war for the sake of ideas’. Their militarism has drawn new encouragement from a praise of struggle which has indeed nothing to do with the mere soldiers’ battle, but which easily slips into a fleshly interpretation. It is quite natural that Bernhardi should quote Nietzsche by name ; and indeed much of Bernhardi is simply Nietzsche transcribed. Take for instance these sayings : ‘Without war, inferior or demoralized races would only too easily swamp the healthy and vital ones, and a general decadence would

<sup>1</sup> The writer’s copy of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, dated 1906, bears the imprint, ‘58th to 61st Thousand’

be the result. War is one of the essential factors of morality.' So has Nietzsche ministered to that which he despised.

Finally, he has helped to swell the contempt and hatred of England which, if one may judge from much recent German literature, is almost a national passion. That 'nation of consummate cant', that 'fundamentally mediocre species', that 'herd of drunkards and rakes', in which slave-morality has reached its zenith, infallibly attracted on its thick head the lightnings of Nietzsche's indignation—as it also attracted on its cunning and diabolical policy the thunders of Treitschke.

### III

Treitschke was already a professor of history in Berlin while Nietzsche was a professor of philology at Bâle. Unlike Nietzsche, who was unknown to his own generation, Treitschke had great and abounding vogue during the twenty-two years, from 1874 to 1896, in which he lectured at Berlin. The German professor has always been more closely in contact with affairs of State than the teachers of our English Universities, probably because German Universities are themselves more closely in contact with the State, and probably because learning carries more weight and exerts more influence in Germany than it does in England. German professors of law, like Savigny and Gierke, have left a deep mark on the history of German law, and German professors of history, like Dahlmann and Treitschke, have left a deep mark on the history of German politics. None of them has left a deeper mark than Treitschke. His lectures at Berlin were attended by soldiers and by administrators as well as by students; and the version of German history and the interpretation of political

theory which he taught are living and moulding forces to the present day.

In a country like Germany, with a new Empire not yet irrefragably grounded, and with lines of division still present to separate the Prussians of the north from the Bavarians and other Germans of the south, it is natural that the interpretation of past history should be influenced by, and should in turn be used to influence, the politics of the present. In what is called the Prussian School of History this blending of politics and history is most remarkable. Droysen writes a *History of Prussian Policy* to laud and magnify Prussia; Sybel writes the story of *The Foundation of the German Empire* to justify the ways of Bismarck; Treitschke, greatest of all, writes his *German History* to point the moral that Prussia is the chosen nation of Germany. Thus he has served, in the national politics of Germany, to aid the movement towards Prussianization. He would indeed have preferred to see the incorporation of all Germany in Prussia as a single unitary State in 1870, rather than witness, as he had to do, the institution of a federal Empire. But he consoled himself by thinking and teaching that the Empire was in reality only a greater Prussia, and that, federal as it might seem, it was essentially a unitary State under the King of Prussia in his capacity of Emperor; and he did what in him lay to make his teaching true.

It is in the external politics of Germany, and in her policy in Europe, that the most striking side of Treitschke's influence is to be seen. Here his *Politik* is the crucial book. The *Politik* consists of two volumes based on the notes of the lectures delivered by Treitschke at Berlin, from 1874 onwards, on the science of politics.

Its central tenet and cardinal principle may be summarized in four words: 'the State is Power'. And if we should attempt to descry in advance the bearing of these words, it may be seen in another pithy phrase: 'war is politics *par excellence*'. The cult of power and the praise of war are as much articles of faith with Treitschke as they are with Nietzsche; but the power is the power of Prussia, and the war is the war of Prussia. And then, despite some fundamental similarities, Treitschke had no love for Nietzsche. Nietzsche's 'good European' is a bad Prussian; his 'will to power' is an individual will, and the only power that Treitschke tolerates is the power of the collective national State.

Nationalism, which Nietzsche condemned, is the starting-point and goal of Treitschke. His fundamental postulate may be simply stated. The German nation is and must be supreme and only sovereign of its destinies, and must freely and for itself determine its place in the world. 'Agreed,' most of us will instantly answer. Perhaps we shall not agree so readily if we realize what 'sovereignty' and 'place in the world' really mean. Sovereignty, we shall find, means practical immunity from international obligation; place in the world, we shall find, means nothing fixed or determinate, but all that the sword can carve.

The State is power, says Treitschke, as Machiavelli had said before. It is power, because its highest duty is its self-preservation, and the primary means of its self-preservation is power. But even so, power after all is not an end, but only a means; and it will only be justified if the end is just. Now that end is the preservation of the State. Is the preservation of the State, then, an end so absolute as to justify absolute

power ? To Treitschke the question only admits of an affirmative answer. But why should the preservation of the State be an end so absolute as to justify absolute power ? Because, Treitschke answers, the State is the home and the organ of culture. Now this answer raises difficulties. In the first place, if the fundamental cause of the existence and preservation of the State is culture, then the essential attribute of the State is not power but culture : and the State should be defined not as power, but as the organ of culture, which only uses power as a means to culture, and so far as it is such a means. In the second place, this culture needs definition. Is it something exclusive, something *sui generis*, something absolutely peculiar to each particular State ? If that be assumed, some question may arise of the relative values of the different cultures of different States, and it may be asked whether each and every culture of each and every State is equally valuable and equally final. Or again, is culture something general, something common, something to which all States contribute and in which all States share ? If that be assumed, some question may arise of the need of common action to preserve such common culture, and it may be asked whether such common action, issuing, let us suppose, in a Concert of Europe and a public law of Europe, does not involve some limitation on the absolute and exclusive sovereignty and self-sufficiency of the State.

The assumption which Treitschke makes, and which the Germans generally seem to make, is that the 'culture' of which they love to speak is exclusive, *sui generis*, peculiar to their State. The real hypothesis of all their reasoning is an exclusive nationalism. We read of *Deutsche Treue*, *Deutsche Tapferkeit*, *Deutsche Kultur*, until we begin to realize that the German mind



lives in an exclusively German world of its own. The wind of the spirit, that blows freely through Europe, stops at the Rhine, and a new wind of the German spirit takes its place. East of the Rhine, everything must bear the German print ; the vocabulary must be pure German and only German ; the very commodities must be German and only German. Now this exclusive national culture of Germany is assumed to be a thing final and ultimate, of final and absolute value ; and therefore the State which sustains it is equally final and equally ultimate.

The State is the highest thing in the external society of man ; above it there is nothing at all in the history of the world.

This once assumed, its self-preservation, and to that end its power, become imperative.

To care for its power is the highest moral duty of the State. Of all political weaknesses that of feebleness is the most abominable and despicable : it is the sin against the Holy Spirit of politics.

This exclusive nationalism is perhaps not natural to the German ; and that may explain why it is so truculently inculcated by Treitschke. In the face of 'particularism', into which the Southern German falls, in the face of cosmopolitanism, for which the assimilative German has a natural instinct, and which some of its greatest thinkers have preached, the Prussian cult (for it is fundamentally Prussian) naturally runs to the other extreme. If that extreme only affected the internal conditions of Germany, as it springs from the internal conditions of Germany, it would be a matter of less concern to the world at large. But it affects all Europe ; for the conclusions to which it leads are conclusions that go to determine the policy of Germany



towards other States. And exclusive nationalism, expressing itself in the cult of power, issues in an attitude to the comity of Europe which constitutes a menace to international law and a constant threat of aggressive war.

In discussing international law, Treitschke first states, in order to dismiss, what he regards as two extreme and therefore untenable views. One is the Machiavellian view, which regards the State as mere physical power, able to do whatever it will. This he rejects, because the State is not mere power, but a power with a moral content, which cannot secure its moral ideals internally unless it binds itself by some law externally. The other is the 'Liberal' theory, which 'regards the State as a fine young fellow, who is to be washed and combed and sent to school, and to be thankful and just and God knows what besides'. This theory preaches an imaginary law, laid down *ex cathedra* by professors; but such a law has no sanction and therefore no value, and it would in the last resort demand a Roman pontiff with supreme authority as its executor—a demand which would banish freedom from our beautiful world.

There remains a third view, which Treitschke holds. This view postulates a positive international law, historically developed, which goes on the basis that one must not demand too much from human nature. The foundation of such a law is the principle of give and take, among great States of equal size, which have to live together. That principle demands a system of *great* States, because 'history shows the continuous growth of great States out of decadent small States'—a growth which ends in the great State of adequate size, which is at last ready for peace to protect its existence and its culture. It demands in the second place a system of *equal* States, because no one State should be able to permit itself

to do what it likes without danger to itself. Small States like Belgium and Holland, 'so long the home of international law, to its great loss', are prone to a sentimental view, because they fear aggression; and they demand in the name of humanity concessions at once contrary to the power of the State, unnatural, and unreasonable.

Few people realize to-day how ridiculous it is that Belgium should feel itself the home of international law. A State in an abnormal position must have an abnormal view of international law. Belgium is neutral; it is emasculated (*verstümmelt*); it cannot produce a healthy international law.

On the other hand, over-great States like England have a still worse influence. The overgrown sea-power of England destroys equilibrium at sea. England thus treads international law under her feet; she maltreats neutrals abominably; she insists on a law of war at sea far more inhuman than the law of war on land. Only by building a navy which will produce an equilibrium on the sea can any Power secure humanity and the observance of proper international law.

International law thus represents the rules that result from the equilibrium of great and equal States. But even so it is precarious: it is a law of imperfection. It cannot diminish the sovereignty of the State. 'The State is no violet that blushes unseen: its might must stand out proudly in the light.' When the Ego of its sovereignty is threatened vitally, all bonds are more honoured in the breach than the observance.

It is ridiculous to advise a State which is in competition with other States to start by taking the catechism into its hands.

Not the catechism but the necessity of self-preservation is the canon of its action; and from this canon two results may be deduced. In the

first place, international treaties are no absolute limit, but a voluntary self-limitation, of the State. It has freely restricted itself; it may as freely remove or repudiate the restriction, if there be any vital question of the preservation of itself, its power, and its culture. In the second place, every treaty or obligation of a State must be held to be limited by the proviso *rebus sic stantibus*. 'A State cannot bind its will for the future over against other States'. If historical development changes circumstances, treaties and obligations are *ipso facto* changed and, it may be, nullified. Whether there has been such change is a point which the State itself alone can judge. There is no judge set over the State, and any judgement on this grave issue must be and can only be its own.<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate effect of this doctrine is to leave decision not to the scales of justice, but to the arbitrament of the sword. Let us take, for instance, an international guarantee of the neutrality of a State. We may read in Treitschke that 'if a State is not in a position [if, in

<sup>1</sup> How exclusive nationalism affects a writer's attitude to international law may be seen from Bernhardi:

Each nation evolves its own conception of right, each has its particular ideals and aims, which spring with a certain inevitableness from its character and historical life. Even if a comprehensive international code were drawn up, no self-respecting nation would sacrifice its own conception of right to it. By so doing it would renounce its highest ideals: it would allow its own sense of justice to be violated by an injustice.

Bernhardi's references to Belgium are as curious as those of Treitschke. He uses the proviso *rebus sic stantibus* to raise a doubt whether Belgium is neutral to-day:

When she was proclaimed neutral, no one contemplated that she would lay claim to a large and valuable region of Africa. It may well be asked whether the acquisition of such territory is not *ipso facto* a breach of neutrality.

He adds that 'the conception of permanent neutrality is contrary to the essential nature of the State, which can only attain its highest moral aims in competition with other States'.

other words, it has not a sword of sufficient power] to maintain its neutrality, it is empty words to talk of its neutrality'. To the sword therefore Treitschke turns. Since there is no supreme court of international law, he argues, since history is in a perpetual flux, and historical development makes things stand otherwise than they did, war is justified, and must be conceived as ordained of God.

In 1866 Treitschke thought and said that any dragoon who had struck a Croat down had done more for the cause of Germany than the subtlest head with the best pen. As time went on, this subtle head fell more and more under the glamour of the sword. The German professor lent his pen, as has happened more than once in Germany, to put an ideal interpretation on given facts which in themselves and without such interpretation were somewhat gross; and learning bowed the knee before the soldier as the saviour of culture. Two functions, says Treitschke, belong to the State—the administration of law, and the making of war. It is war that is politics *par excellence*, and war therefore is the great function of the State. It is the great healer; it cannot be thought or wished out of the world, because it is the only medicine for a sick nation. It heals the State by renewing the spirit of membership and of sacrifice. It makes men realize that they are members one of another, and all limbs of one body politic. 'Therein lies the majesty of war, that the petty individual altogether vanishes before the great thought of the State.' And thus 'it is political idealism that involves war'. Nor is war only the sovereign remedy of States; it is also the nurse of the finest virtue of the individual.

What a perversion of morality it were, if one struck heroism out of humanity. . . . But the living God

will see to it that war shall always recur as a terrible medicine for humanity.

This hymn to war carries us back to Nietzsche. But whereas Nietzsche looked to war as a way of evolving a European superman, Treitschke looks to war as the expression of an exclusively national super-nation ; and while Nietzsche loved neither nationalism nor militarism, Treitschke is the lover of both. The danger with which his doctrine menaces Europe is simple. An ardently national State, proud of an exclusive culture which it conceives as the highest thing in the world, is released by his teaching from any real obligations to the public law of the European comity of nations, and armed with the sword for the preservation of its own exclusive culture. The fate of Europe seems to depend on the interpretation which Germany will place on the word 'preservation'. It is difficult not to think that that interpretation has been growing wider and wider. The preservation of German culture has come to mean, as far as one can see, not merely the preservation of the German State but the retention within the Germanic fold of all emigrants, and even the ingathering into the German fold of all the separate elements of the German stock. The policy of retention appears in the efforts made to maintain German schools, German speech, German newspapers in countries, like Brazil, in which there is a large German colony ; the policy of ingathering appears in the Pan-German attitude to countries like Switzerland and Holland. Pan-Germanism is perhaps a matter of words rather than of actual policy. But even a sober judgment may well fear that this concept of the preservation of an exclusive German culture is a real and driving force—so real that it has become something of a religion. It is perhaps extravagant to feel that the Germans have



tended to a certain attitude of mind like that of early Mohammedanism, an attitude of mind based on the conviction that there is one culture, so precious that it may well be spread by the sword ; and yet one may read in the writings of German savants phrases which make one uneasy. One thinker, for instance, can argue that just as a small State cannot afford a *Dreadnought*, so it cannot build any whole and rounded body of culture. A small State, he feels, must be dependent on the great culture-State for the greater part of its spiritual life, and its incorporation in that greater State will only enrich and invigorate its real vitality.

After all, the conception of power, however defensive it may be in the honest opinion of its votaries, and however much it may be used as the servant of the preservation of the State, tends in the long run, and must tend in the long run, to twist round in their hands and to show its offensive edge. Power cannot be the servant of defence ; power in its nature becomes the master of offence. It is true that Germany has to keep watch and ward on the Rhine and the Vistula ; it is true that there are internal forces of cosmopolitanism and particularism against which she has to guard. It is perhaps also true that the means designed to this end are in danger of becoming themselves the end. German culture may seem a precious thing when it is conceived as standing on the defence against the ' Slav menace ' of the East. It does not seem so precious when it becomes a menace itself ; and that follows inevitably when it betakes itself to power as the means of its defence. Culture, after all, is a thing of the spirit ; by the spirit it grows, and by the spirit it is defended. German culture is not really defended against the Slav by the spirit of power which prohibits the use of the Polish language and expropriates



Polish landowners. Not only is it not defended; it is killed. The culture which allies itself to power ceases to be culture and becomes a mere power.

In the year 416 B.C., Thucydides records, a debate was held between the great State of the Athenians and the inhabitants of a small island called Melos, to whom the Athenians offered the alternative between the sword and submission. 'You know as well as we do,' say the Athenians, 'that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.' The Melians plead for consideration of what is fair and right. That, they urge, is a common good. 'Surely you are as much concerned in this as any, since your fall would be a signal for the heaviest vengeance, and an example to the world.' 'We feel no uneasiness about the end of our Empire,' answer the Athenians; 'that is a risk we are content to take.' And they reiterate their faith in the necessary law of human nature, by which men rule wherever they can. Thus did Athenian culture become Athenian power, and thus did Athens preach that might was right. Even so to-day does Bernhardi, faithful disciple of Treitschke in his attitude to the 'common good' of international law and to the rights of the strong nation armed, preach the equivalence of power and right. Where a growing nation seeks to conquer new territory, 'might is at once the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by the arbitrament of war', which, he adds with a modern refinement, gives 'a biologically just decision'. Marvellous too in his eyes, as in the eyes of the Athenians, is the doctrine 'that the weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nation'. Well did Mommsen say to these new Athenians, 'Have a care, gentlemen, lest in this

State, which has been at once a power in arms and in intelligence, the intelligence should vanish, and nothing but the pure military State should remain'.

It is as a great military Power that Germany now stands before the world. She has taken unto herself the ideals of power and might, of massivity and grandiosity. It is colossal ; it is not culture. What we may hope, and hope earnestly and in anguish, is that she will return to worship with her heart the culture to which she pays abundant service of the lips ; that she will enter again into the comity of European States, by sacrificing the false ideal of an exclusive culture guarded by the sword, which in its nature cannot guard it, to the true ideal of a common culture guarded by the Spirit, which alone can kill and make alive ; and that she will again be a king's daughter all glorious within, as she was in those days when, disunited and devoid of ' power ', she gave of her spirit to Europe great music, great poetry, and great philosophy. Thus may she shed that curious paganism, which sees in ' heroism ' the cardinal virtue, and finds heroism only in war ; thus may she return from Nietzsche's ' will to power ' to Luther's justification by faith—from Treitschke's praise of war to Kant's vision of permanent peace.

E. B.

OXFORD,

*September 23, 1914.*

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